

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** - This disorder can develop in children after they have personally experienced or witnessed a serious traumatic event.

### **Treatment**

Treatment options for children with serious emotional disturbances may include a combination of:

- Therapy
- Medications
- Hospitalization (rare)

Most treatment options for children with serious emotional disturbances can only be prescribed by a doctor or psychologist. Remember that most children with serious emotional disturbances respond well to treatment. You and your doctor or therapist will work together to decide what type of treatment will work best for your child and your family.

### **Therapy**

There are many different types of therapy. Part of your child's treatment plan may include:

- Individual Therapy - This involves an ongoing discussion between your child and the therapist. As you might suspect, the older the child, the more beneficial this type of treatment may be, although some therapists specialize in providing therapy to very young children.

Generally speaking, the goals of therapy will be to improve self esteem, social skills, and interpersonal relationships. Therapists also teach a variety of techniques such as anger management, relaxation, problem solving and self-control -- to help change problem behaviors.

- Group Therapy - Occasionally, a child may be involved in group therapy. This involves one or more therapists and several children with similar serious emotional disturbances. This type of group can provide a safe environment for your child to develop, learn and practice new skills.
- Family Therapy - Children with serious emotional disturbances impact everyone around them. Family members learn how to interact and deal more successfully with their child who is experiencing serious emotional disturbances.
- Play Therapy - Play therapy is often an appropriate approach to counseling young children because most children under the age of 10 have not yet developed the reasoning skills or verbal abilities to express their thoughts and feelings. A therapist will use toys and play to assist a child in expressing his or her feelings.

### **Medication**

The medications used today for the treatment of serious emotional disturbances can dramatically improve the quality of a child's life. Just as a pair of glasses can help a person to see better, medication can help a child with serious emotional disturbances see the world more clearly. When medication is effective, the results can be significant.

However, medication is not the solution to all serious emotional disturbances, nor is it the answer for all children. It can be a difficult process to know exactly which medication (and dosage) will work best for any individual child. Often, trial-and-error is the rule, necessitating multiple medication trials until the right combination of drugs is found. This process can be frustrating, and may require time and patience on the part of you and your child.

For those that it does help, medication can make the mental health symptoms less severe, but it does not “cure” the problem. Medication should only be used under close medical supervision, and only as a part of a comprehensive treatment program that includes a careful diagnostic evaluation, education and therapy.

There are many types of medications used to treat serious emotional disturbances. There are too many to list them here. But, like any medication, for any condition, you will want to become very familiar with the benefits and side effects. Work with your doctor, and observe and monitor your child closely whenever a medication is started or stopped, or if the dosage is adjusted. Be sure that your child takes all medications correctly, the right dose at the right time.

To find out more about any medication that may be prescribed for your child, the following resources are available:

- Your pharmacist
- Your local library
- On the Internet
  - “Guide to Psychiatric Medications for Children and Adolescents” by the NYU Child Study Center  
[www.aboutourkids.org/articles/guide\\_psychiatric\\_medications\\_children\\_adolescents](http://www.aboutourkids.org/articles/guide_psychiatric_medications_children_adolescents)
  - “Facts for Families”, a series of informative fact sheets that include information on medications for children by the Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.  
[www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts\\_for\\_families/psychiatric\\_medication\\_for\\_children\\_and\\_adolescents\\_part\\_ii\\_types\\_of\\_medications](http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/psychiatric_medication_for_children_and_adolescents_part_ii_types_of_medications)

### **Hospitalization**

It is always best to treat a child’s serious emotional disturbances in the “least restrictive” setting. This means that your child will most often receive treatment in the most natural environment available, such as in the office of a doctor, therapist, a Service Coordination Unit, or even at home. However, there are some situations when your child may need the most intensive treatment available. Generally speaking, a child would only be admitted to a hospital or the psychiatric unit of a full service hospital if:

- He or she is a clear danger to himself or herself (threatening or trying to commit suicide).
- He or she is a danger to others (threatening or trying to hurt someone else).

**If you observe the above behaviors, call your child's doctor or therapist immediately. If you don't have a doctor or therapist or if you can't reach them, take your child to the nearest emergency room, call an ambulance, or call Re:solve Crisis Network 1-888-7-YOU CAN (1-888-796-8226).**

Again, you know your child best. The decision to hospitalize a child should not be taken lightly, but it may be the best option at a given time in order to keep your child safe.